

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 EB-07 OES-03 ACDA-05 COME-00

AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00

DLOS-03 /088 W

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6234

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 1554

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, BG, IN, ENRG

SUBJECT: INDO-BANGLADESH MARITIME BOUNDARY

REF: STATE 65635

SUMMARY. WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT THERE IS ANY MARITIME BONDARY AGREEMENT AS YET. ASHLAND REP IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT INDIAN CLAIM REPORTED REFTEL. IT APPEARS BOTH BDG AND GOI HAVE HIGHLY SPECULATIVE INFORMATION CONCERNING POSSIBILITY OF OIL IN ASHLAND AREA WHICH MAY EXPLAIN THEIR TOUGH NEGOTIATING POSITIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. CONTRARY TO REPORT IN REFTEL, THERE IS NO RPT NO BDG/GOI AGREEMENT ON A MARITIME BOUNDARY AS YET, ACCORDING TO ALL INDICATIONS HERE. INDEED, FOREIGN MINISTER KAMAL HOSSAIN IS REPORTED TO BE TRAVELING TO DELHI MARCH 28 FOR FURTHER TALKS WITH GOI OFFICIALS ON THE MARITIME BOUNDARY ISSUE.

2. EMBOFF PASSED MARCH 25 INFORMATION IN REFTEL, INCLUDING COORDINATES, TO ASHLAND REP, DACCA, WHO
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HAD NOT RPT NOT BEEN APPROACHED BY INDIAN HIGH COMMIS-

SION HERE. NOR HAD ASHLAND REP HERE YET LEARNED OF INDIAN APPROACH TO ASHLAND IN WASHINGTON. ASHLAND REP FOUND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS INFORMATION "EXTREMELY SERIOUS".

3. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MARCH 25 MEETING WITH EMBOFF, ASHLAND REP CALLED ON PETROBANGLA CHAIRMAN, AT LATTER'S REQUEST. REP SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD EMBOFF THAT CHAIRMAN HAD SOUGHT ADVICE ON BDG NEGOTIATING STANCE AND ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT BDG CLAIM TO AREA WEST OF ASHLAND AREA. (FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT HERE NO RPT NO BDG/GOI AGREEMENT YET.) ASHLAND REP RECOMMENDED, INTER ALIA, THAT BDG SEEK LEGAL COUNSEL.

4. ASHLAND REP SOUGHT CARLBERG CONTRACT AREA COORDINATES FROM EMBOFF IN ORDER TO GIVE THEM TO BDG. MAY WE PROVIDE THEM FROM NEW DELHI 2913?

5. ASHLAND REP ALSO PROVIDED FOLLOWING ACCOUNT WHICH STRONGLY SUGGESTS BDG AND GOI MAY ASSUME THERE IS OIL IN ASHLAND CONTRACT AREA. ASHLAND REP SAID THAT BENGALEE OFFICIAL WHO HAD BEEN ON BOARD ASHLAND SEISMIC SURVEY VESSEL DURING SURVEY WORK HAD PREPARED A REPORT, WHICH INCLUDED SENTENCE TO EFFECT THAT SEISMIC WORK HAD REVEALED TWO STRUCTURES IN ASHLAND CONTRACT AREA. ASHLAND REP POINTED OUT TO EMBOFF THAT SEISMIC SURVEY DATA AS YET NEITHER PROCESSED NOR INTERPRETED, WHICH TAKES THREE TO SIX MONTHS, SO THAT BENGALEE OFFICIAL'S REPORT WAS, AT THIS STAGE, HIGHLY SPECULATIVE. HOWEVER, TO HIS DISMAY, ASHLAND REP SUBSEQUENTLY LEARNED THAT A CANADIAN, OF BENGALEE ORIGIN, RESIDENT IN CALCUTTA, HAD WHILE APPLYING FOR A POSITION WITH ASHLAND IN BANGLADESH, REVEALED DETAILS OF BENGALEE OFFICIAL'S REPORT. ASHLAND REP HAD THEN GONE TO PETROBANGLA CHAIRMAN TO RECOUNT STORY AND EXPRESS CONCERN. BOTH CHAIRMAN AND ASHLAND REP HAD CONCLUDED IT EXTREMELY PROBABLE THAT INDIANS HAD GOTTEN SAME SPECULATIVE INFORMATION. BOTH FURTHER CONCLUDED THAT GOI NEGOTIATORS COULD WELL BE PROCEEDING ON ASSUMPTION THERE GENUINELY GOOD POSSIBILITY OF OIL

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IN ASHLAND CONTRACT AREA.

6. ASHLAND REP NOTED INDIAN CLAIM REPORTED REFTEL NOT ONLY CUTS OFF ABOUT HALF OF ASHLAND CONTRACT AREA, BUT ALSO CROSSES CORNER OF CANADIAN SUPERIOR CONTRACT AREA. (DEPT. MAY WISH MENTION THIS TO CANADIANS.)

7. COMMENT: WE DO NOT RPT NOT DOUBT ASHLAND REP'S

STORY OF CANADIAN JOB-SEEKER (PARA 5 ABOVE) OR ITS
INFERENCE CONCERNING INDIAN PRESUMPTION OF LIKELIHOOD
OF OIL. BENGALIEE NEGOTIATORS, WHO HAD DIRECT ACCES
TO ORIGINAL REPORT, ARE DOUBTLESS UNDER SIMILAR
PRESUMPTION. THUS, WHILE ORIGINAL REPORT PREMATURE
AT BEST AND CERTAINLY EXTREMELY SPECULATIVE, PRESENT
SITUATION APPEARS BE THAT: (1) THERE NO AGREED
BOUNDARY; AND (2) BOTH GOI AND BDG NEGOTIATORS MAY

BE HARDENING THEIR POSITIONSIN LIGHT OF PROBABILITY
THAT DISPUTED AREA MAY BE OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO THEIR
RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS. OBVIOUSLY, THERE ARE GOING
TO BE MORE RUMORS AND SPECULATION AS WE GO ALONG AND
WE ANTICIPATE AN INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT NEGOTIATING
SITUATION FOR BOTH SIDES.
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